

Retirement Road Map

Let these tips be your guide
for determining how to enjoy
a meaningful retirement.

By Emily Anderson



Dr. Nancy K. Schlossberg should have been retirement-ready. Not only is this doctor of counseling a respected expert on life transitions, she also was a voluntary retiree. “Everything should have been hunky-dory, but it wasn’t,” says Schlossberg, author of *Revitalizing Retirement: Reshaping Your Identity, Relationships, and Purpose*.



Uncovering Motives

Many retirees experience similar feelings. “For people for whom work has been the way they’ve organized their lives, retirement presents new challenges,” Schlossberg says. These include finding new ways to keep busy, stay social, and learn what roles to fulfill outside the workplace.

These challenges may be one reason people postpone retirement. A recent Gallup poll says the current average retirement age is 61. However, according to the Transamerica Retirement Survey of Workers, 58 percent of those planning to retire say they’ll continue working.

Think about how you’d like to define your retirement, whether it’s continuing to work or shifting attention to new interests. Schlossberg’s tips can get you started:

- **Rediscover your purpose.** Decide what role you want to take on now that you’re retired. Ask yourself: “What mark do I want to make?” Schlossberg says.
- **Define your identity.** Life often is defined by work. “Whatever you did, you had a tagline,” Schlossberg says. “You had an identity and a way to think about yourself and present yourself to others.” Begin defining your post-retirement identity by considering things you’d like to do, or things you’re sorry you’ve never done, Schlossberg says.
- **Build new relationships.** “You need to develop new groups and get involved in new communities,” Schlossberg says. These connections can encourage interaction and introduce you to involvement opportunities.

Discovering Opportunities

Use your retirement years to try new things, explore who you are, and learn what you love to do. There are many places to begin looking for outlets for meaningful activity: Enroll in classes online or at a local college; join a club or an organization in your community; travel to far-off destinations through elder travel groups.

Also consider volunteering. “I think that’s a very important avenue to discover who you are and what you want to do,” Schlossberg says. Volunteering can help you remain an engaged and essential community member, and it also benefits your health. The Corporation for National and Community Service says volunteers live longer, happier lives, and have greater functional ability later in life.

Looking Forward

Remember: What gives you purpose five years into retirement may not be what drives you 10 years later. Retirement offers endless opportunities to reinvent yourself or reinvigorate your passions. “It’s not a once-and-forever decision,” Schlossberg says. “Transitions just keep happening.” ■

Finding Their Way

Nancy K. Schlossberg, author of *Revitalizing Retirement: Reshaping Your Identity, Relationships, and Purpose*, has identified categories retirees fall into when searching for purpose. These include continuers—individuals who modify their work and interests for retirement—and adventurers—those who take on new and unfamiliar activities. Many *Life Care Services*™ residents have followed Schlossberg’s paths.



The Adventurer

Edith Sherr explored an entirely new hobby after retirement: gardening. This North Oaks* resident hasn’t always had a green thumb. The former New York City schoolteacher never had a garden beyond her apartment windowsill.

After learning how to tend the soil with help from the North Oaks Health Center Director, Edith now has taken over some of the community’s raised beds. Edith shares her bounty, delivering fresh herbs to the kitchen and passing out cherry tomatoes to friends. “Now I really know what I’m doing,” Edith says. “And it’s fun. It’s something brand new, and I learned it from zero.”



The Continuer

For 19 years, Joan Galliher was an assistant to an insurance salesman, but it was what she did after work that was her true passion. “While I was working, I became active in Literacy Volunteers of America,” Joan says. She was with the

organization for 15 years. During that time, she spent seven years working one-on-one with an adult student, teaching him how to read. She also was on the board of trustees.

After retiring, “I pursued interests I had before, but they intensified,” Joan says. She continued to teach reading, but shifted her focus to younger generations. For 13 years, Joan volunteered at an inner-city school in Hartford, Connecticut. After moving to Chester Village West*, she reactivated the community’s volunteer reading program and now enjoys weekly visits to a local second-grade classroom. “It’s just delightful to be with younger people,” Joan says. “Where else can I get all of those hugs?”

*North Oaks is a Life Care Services community in Pikesville, Maryland.

*Chester Village West is a Life Care Services community in Chester, Connecticut.

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